

# Hawaii MARINE ON POINT



HAWAII MARINE D SECTION

OCTOBER 21, 2005

Sgt. Andrew Jones (left), an instructor for the Scout Sniper Basic Course, assists a student during the stalking portion of the 10-week long training at Schofield Barracks, Oct. 13.

## Silent Scope: Stalking

### Sniper students learn the finer points of hide and seek

**Story and Photos By  
Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson**

*Combat Correspondent*

*Part three of four*

Marines going through the Scout Sniper Basic Course participated in the individual stalking portion of their 10-week training, Oct. 13, at the Schofield Barracks East Range Training Area.

"Our first stalk was about a nine hundred-meter stalk, and the terrain had a lot of trees and shrubs for the students to hide behind," said Sgt. Michael A. McClay, chief instructor, Scout Sniper Basic Course. "The second stalk we did was from about seven hundred meters away. Although it was a shorter stalk, it was still more difficult because the terrain is all grass and is on a field."

McClay explained that the most important thing Marines should learn when they're stalking is to try and become a master in the art of blending.

"It really takes nothing for a person to hide behind a tree or bush and fire," said McClay, a West Palm Beach, Fla. native. "If you can master blending then you can master stalking. Anyone can hide, but not snipers, we blend in with the surrounding terrain."

McClay, 25, explained how "vegging" or tying pieces of grass or anything that a Marine can tie to himself or uniform to help him blend in with his surroundings is very important



**A Marine student attending the Scout Sniper Basic Course scopes out observers during the stalking portion of the 10-week long training course at Schofield Barracks' East Range Training Area.**

and can make or break the stalk.

"The Marines must learn how to veg," said McClay. "If they're stalking and have veg from a different colored type of grass and come up to another type of grass, then they must re-veg in order to blend in with their new surrounding areas, and continue on to take a shot."

In order to successfully complete the stalking portion, the Marines must stalk the observers without being seen and come within 400 meters and take a well-aimed shot.

"The Marines first have to range estimate their shot to make sure their in range," said Sgt. Andrew Jones,

instructor, Scout Sniper Basic Course.

"After the Marines make their first shot, they must call for an identification check to make sure the student can actually see the observers. The observers hold up a letter and the Marine must identify the letter to prove that he can see the truck."

During this process, if the observer thinks he sees the sniper, he will radio to a walker and will direct him to where he thinks the sniper is.

"The observers only get three chances to find the sniper, if he isn't spotted then he gets to take his shot," said Jones, a Kirkland, Wash. native. "Anything like a shine from

the scope or something that doesn't look natural or stands out can give away a snipers position."

Jones explained that a lot of the students have a problem with over-head movement.

"They just don't understand that they're movement shakes everything above and around them," said Jones. "Also the students find it hard to find the observers. Low crawling for so long and then looking up and trying to see the observers can be hard, because you may lose your sense of direction. So a lot of students have problems with this."

Jones said, the students are used to being told how to move and are unsure of their own abilities.

"During School of Infantry or Marine Combat training the Marines are being told the whole time which way to go," said Jones. "Now they're having to start to think on their own, and to depend on themselves."

Out of the 28 students that started the course, 24 remain in the training. These Marines will continue on with the next portion of the course.

"Everything the Marines have learned and are going

to learn is all going to help them very much in their final exercise," said Jones. "They need to pay attention to everything because it's all going to be used in the end."



**Sgt. Michael A. McClay, chief instructor, Scout Sniper Basic Course, gives students a few words of advice before releasing them to start their 700-meter stalk.**



**Above —** Observers look out into a field at students going through the Scout Sniper Basic Course. The students stalk observers and try to take a shot at them from within 400 meters away. If a Marine is spotted by an observer, he is called out and must leave the field.

**Left —** Lance Cpl. Geoff A. Kercher ties pieces of grass to his Ghillie suit in an attempt to camouflage himself during the stalking portion of the Scout Sniper Basic Course attach what they can to their Ghillie suit in order to blend in with their surroundings as they stalk their target, hopefully, unnoticed.